

The Green Factor

Does protecting the planet destroy jobs? Bush says yes, Clinton says no, and their running mates fight it out on the stump

By EUGENE LINDEN

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE "Environmental President"? In 1988 Vice President Bush vowed to combat the greenhouse effect with the "White House effect," and mercilessly attacked Michael Dukakis for his failure to clean up Boston Harbor. But last June, President Bush played Scrooge at the Earth Summit in Brazil. In September he visited timber country in the Pacific Northwest, where he promised to lift a court-imposed injunction that has halted logging in federally owned ancient forests. His Interior Department is planning to open national forests to private strip mining. What happened between 1988 and 1992? Politics happened.

While the Administration has not entirely abandoned its green appeal—White House officials claim that Bush has done more for the environment than any other President since Teddy Roosevelt—the reelection team is betting that U.S. voters will put their anxiety over the economy ahead of their worries about the planet. Thus the Bush campaign is attempting to paint Bill Clinton as a hostage to environmental extremists who would sacrifice American jobs to mollify the tree huggers. Point man in this assault: Vice President Dan Quayle. His main target: Clinton's running mate, Al Gore.

Clinton, for his part, is betting that concern for the environment is more than

MAN VS. NATURE: loggers clear-cut a stretch of forest in Washington State



DAN LAMONT—MATRIX

a fad. He has assigned Gore the mission of delivering the message that working to preserve the biosphere can create rather than cost jobs. Clinton and Gore contend that sound environmental policies can be an engine of growth that will help the American economy compete with Germany and Japan in the 1990s.

The different ways the two camps use environmental issues reflect their divergent visions about the forces that will shape America's future. The Democrats argue that environmental decisions should be an integral part of economic planning. The Republicans seem to be saying the country should address environmental problems only when it can afford to. Nowhere do these differences emerge more sharply than in the attitudes of the vice-presidential contenders.

Senator Gore, who led the congressional delegation that attended the Earth Summit in Rio, is the Senate's most committed and knowledgeable environmentalist. Last spring Houghton Mifflin published Gore's best-selling *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*, a call for Americans to take urgent action in the face of a global ecological crisis.

Vice President Quayle, by contrast, argues that existing programs to improve the environment are more than adequate, that the state of America's air, water and forests is getting better, and that further improvements will come at the expense of jobs. Quayle plays a major policymaking role in this area as chairman of the President's Council on Competitiveness, an eight-member panel that, in the name of reducing government impediments to business, has worked to loosen environmental regulations on everything from wetlands to air pollution. The council was influential in persuading President Bush, virtually alone among world leaders, not to sign a treaty to protect endangered species at the Rio conference. The Administration's argument: that the treaty would harm the U.S. biotechnology industry.

In taking aim at the Democrats' environmental policies, Quayle ridicules Gore's book as "their manifesto." As described by the Vice President, *Earth in the Balance* is a collection of lunatic proposals that calls for a \$100 billion giveaway to the Third World, recommends new taxes that would put millions out of work, compares

capitalists to Nazis and calls for the elimination of the internal-combustion engine. "It's all pretty bizarre stuff," said Quayle in a speech in Grand Rapids, Michigan, last August. "This is a view detached from reality and devoid of common sense."

In his book, Gore does call for new taxes—but only to replace old ones. The idea is to tax ordinary workers less while making polluting industries pay the true costs of their activities. The \$100 billion figure is not a suggested giveaway but merely a computation of what the post-World War II Marshall Plan to reconstruct Europe would cost in today's dollars. The reference to Nazis is a greatly stretched interpretation of Gore's comment in the book that the failure in the past to heed the distress signals coming from the planet is analogous to the failure of the outside world to realize the seriousness of the German threat after Nazis destroyed Jewish homes and synagogues during the Kristallnacht rampage in 1936.

Gore also argues that during the next 25 years the U.S. should develop a more efficient alternative to the internal-combustion engine. It is hard to see why this is any more bizarre than sanctifying a 19th century technology as the core of American prosperity. "If Bush and Quayle want to pretend that 25 years from now our global competitors will be using the same technology on automobile engines that we are using today, they are kidding themselves," says Gore.

In Grand Rapids, Quayle attacked Gore for supporting congressional efforts to raise average fuel economy from 27 to 40 m.p.g., a move, Quayle argued, that would cost 300,000 jobs nationwide. This figure, taken from a study by the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association, is based on the unrealistic assumption that everyone now making a car that gets less than 40 m.p.g. would be put out of work. In contrast, a study to be released this week by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy contends that improving fuel economy to 40 m.p.g. would lead to a net gain of 70,000 jobs by the year 2000. Howard Geller, executive director of the council, says fuel economy creates jobs by spurring the development of efficient new technologies for automobiles and putting money from gasoline savings into the hands of consumers. These gains, adds Geller, will more

than offset job losses in the oil business.

Gore says the jobs-vs.-environment argument is based on the same flawed logic that caused American businesses to disregard business guru W. Edwards Deming's seminal ideas on quality in past decades. "American manufacturers assumed that market forces had already perfectly balanced quality against cost and that any improvements would hurt the bottom line," says Gore. "Deming took his ideas to the Japanese, who proved that you could simultaneously improve quality and profits and proceeded to steal markets from American companies." Gore argues that Bush is now making the same mistake with pollution. The Japanese, already more energy efficient than the U.S., recognize that excessive pollution is a sign of inefficiency and that reducing pollution can help make industry more competitive. For Gore the real job of a competitiveness council would be to foster similar efforts to develop efficient technologies in the U.S.

PRESIDENT BUSH ALSO HAS ATTACKED Gore on the jobs-vs.-environment issue. During a visit to Colville, Washington, last month, he chastised the Senator for advocating protection of the spotted owl, which is endangered because 90% of its old-growth forest habitat has been cut. "It's time to put people ahead of owls," he said, and mockingly challenged Clinton to endorse Gore's book.

Though that message was obviously meant to appeal to Western voters, Bush may have miscalculated its effect. While he was applauded by the region's timber workers, many other Westerners realize that the issue of preserving the remaining fragments of old-growth forest is more complex than owls vs. lumberjacks. George Atiyeh, a former timberman and fourth-generation Oregonian, left the business after watching what clear-cuts have done to the Oregon landscape. "Either my eyes were lying, or I was kidding myself about logging being sustainable," he says. From the air, Oregon's national forests look far worse than the rain forests of Rondônia, Brazil, which has become a symbol of the wanton destruction of the Amazon. Atiyeh argues that automation and exports have cost far more jobs than the protection of endangered species has. Between 1980 and '88 the amount of timber cut in western Oregon increased 19% while timber employment fell 14%. The Administration's hard line on the environment does not appear to be winning many votes—and may even be hurting the Republicans. In a TIME/CNN poll of likely voters taken in late September, half the respondents said the loss of jobs because of environmental regulations was a "big problem." Yet when asked to choose between protecting the environment and protecting jobs, 48% chose the environ-

Is the quality of the environment getting better?

Yes 30%

No 62%

Will the government's current environmental regulations weaken or strengthen the economy in the long run?

Weaken 23%

Strengthen 27%

No effect 36%

Was Bush's statement that he would be the "environmental President" a lie?

Yes 60%

No 28%

From a telephone poll of 1,400 adult Americans taken for TIME/CNN on Sept. 22-24 by Yankelovich Clancy Shulman. Sampling error is ± 2.5.